

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 KUWAIT 05502 231424Z

44

ACTION NEA-07

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 EUR-08 NSC-05 NSCE-00 INR-05

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FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6713

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PARIS

SECDEF/ISA

USCINCEUR

S E C R E T KUWAIT 5502

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, KU, SU

SUBJECT: PURCHASE OF ARMS FROM USSR

REF: (A) KUWAIT 3374 (NOTAL), (B) KUWAIT 5247 (NOTAL).

1. DURING MEETING NOV. 22 WITH ACTING PRIME MINISTER
SHAIKH JABER AL-ALI AL-SABAH ARRANGED AT MY REQUEST, HE
CONFIRMED THAT AGREEMENT TO PURCHASE GROUND-TO-GROUND MISSILES
(PRESUMABLY FROG AND SCUD SINCE HE INDICATED RANGE OF 75
MILES AND 300 MILES) FROM SOVIET UNION, WHICH I REPORTED
IN REF. A, WAS STILL ON. COST OF MISSILES WOULD BE \$300
MILLION. JABER AL-ALI INSISTED THAT THERE WOULD BE NO SOVIET
ADVISORS COMING TO KUWAIT IN CONNECTION WITH THIS PURCHASE

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 KUWAIT 05502 231424Z

AND THAT NECESSARY ADVISORS WOULD BE OBTAINED FROM EGYPT

AND SYRIA WHO HAVE THESE WEAPONS.

2. ACTING PRIME MINISTER SAID THAT THESE MISSILES WERE BEING PURCHASED FOR THEIR DETERRENT EFFECT ON IRAQ. SINCE IRAQ HAS BEEN PROVIDED THESE WEAPONS BY THE SOVIET UNION AND SINCE THESE WEAPONS WOULD BE PURCHASED FROM THE SAME SOURCE, THERE COULD BE NO VALID IRAQI OBJECTION.

3. SHAIKH JABER AL-ALI THEN ADMITTED THAT KUWAIT HAD NO INTENTIONS OF USING THESE MISSILES. HE UNDERSTOOD PERFECTLY WELL THAT IF KUWAIT DECIDED TO USE THEM AGAINST BASRA, FOR INSTANCE, THE IRAQIS WOULD RETALIATE BY WIPING OUT KUWAIT CITY. HOWEVER, BESIDES THEIR DETERRENT VALUE, PURCHASE OF THESE WEAPONS FROM THE SOVIET UNION WOULD SERVE PURPOSE OF DEMONSTRATING TO THIRD WORLD THAT KUWAIT WAS NOT TOTALLY RELYING ON THE WEST FOR THEIR ARMS SUPPLIES.

4. ON THIS LAST POINT, HOWEVER, SHAIKH JABER AL-ALI WISHED TO STRESS THAT KUWAIT INTENDED TO RELY ON U.S. TO PROVIDE ITS AIR DEFENSE SYSTEM (IHAWKS AND A-4S) AND WOULD SEEK TO OBTAIN OTHER WEAPONS FROM THE U.S. AS WELL, BUT ALSO FROM THE UK AND FRANCE. HE ALSO NOTED THAT KUWAIT WOULD PURCHASE SOME WEAPONS FROM YUGOSLAVIA (PRESUMABLY SMALL ARMS) TO UNDERSCORE AGAIN POINT MADE IN PARA 3 ABOVE.

5. AT THIS JUNCTION I RAISED QUESTION OF WHETHER RECENT VISIT OF GOK MILITARY TEAM TO MOSCOW INDICATED INTENTION OF KUWAITIS TO PURCHASE ANTI-AIRCRAFT GUNS (ZSU-23-4) FROM USSR ALSO. SHAIKH JABER AL-ALI SEEMED NOT TO KNOW ABOUT THIS PARTICULAR VISIT (REF B), HOWEVER HE ASSURED ME THAT THERE WAS NO KUWAITI INTENTION OF PURCHASING AIR DEFENSE WEAPONS FROM THE SOVIET UNION AND THAT THEIR PURCHASE WOULD BE RESTRICTED TO GROUND-TO-GROUND MISSILES AND TO SMALL NUMBER OF ARMoured PERSONNEL CARRIERS. (EARLIER SAME DAY CHIEF USLOK HAD INFORMED ME THAT DIRECTOR OF OFFICE OF MINISTER OF DEFENSE HAD TOLD HIM OF REQUEST FOR PURCHASE OF U.S. VULCAN GROUND-TO-AIR SYSTEM WHICH WOULD BE SOON FORTHCOMING).

6. IN DISCUSSING KUWAIT'S DEFENSIVE STRATEGY SHAIKH JABER
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 KUWAIT 05502 231424Z

AL-ALI REPEATED WHAT HE HAD TOLD ME BEFORE, NAMELY THAT IN ANY REAL CRISIS KUWAIT WOULD TURN TO THE US AND UK AS WELL AS ITS PRINCIPAL ARAB NEIGHBORS TO SEEK ASSISTANCE AND PROTECTION.

7. COMMENT: AS JABER AL-ALI RAMBLED ON IN HIS LIMITED BUT EXPRESSIVE ENGLISH, HE SOUGHT TO CONVEY IMPRESSION THAT, DESPITE OUTWARD APPEARANCES FROM TIME TO TIME, KUWAIT'S

STRATEGIC INTERESTS LAY WITH THOSE OF THE WEST AND PARTICULARLY
WITH THE US AND UK. HE TENDS TO SPEAK IN BROADER POLITICAL
TERMS THAN HIS MINISTERIAL COLLEAGUES AND INDEED CLAIMED
DURING THE CONVERSATION TO BE ABLE TO SPEAK MORE FEELY TO ME
THAN THEY COULD. AS A SENIOR MEMBER OF THE RULING FAMILY
HIS WORD ON POLICY HAS TO BE GIVEN DUE WEIGHT, ALTHOUGH
THE IMPLEMENTATION OF KUWAITI POLICY BY THE CROWN PRINCE/
PRIME MINISTER AND THE OPERATING MINISTERS DOES NOT ALWAYS
REFLECT SO OPENLY THE BASIC KUWAITI INTEREST AS OUTLINED
BY SHAIKH JABER AL-ALI.
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